

Socialism— DEAD OR ALIVE

a roundtable discussion

Is socialism really dead? Or has it just faded into the woodwork? Is it prospering under a variety of more current aliases?

To consider whether the socialist impulse has really been quenched or not, *The American Enterprise* assembled a quintet of veteran observers: **David Horowitz**, New Left editor turned conservative provocateur, currently president of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture; **Eric Breindel**, editorial page editor of the *New York Post* and a nationally syndicated columnist; **John O'Sullivan**, editor of *National Review* and a former adviser to British prime minister Margaret Thatcher; and **Arnold Beichman**, research fellow at the Hoover Institution. **Mark Falcoff**, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, moderated the discussion, which took place in New York City.

"Instruments of Power" from *America Today*, 1930 by Thomas Hart Benton, American, 1889–1975, 92x106". Distemper and egg tempera with oil glaze on gessoed linen. From the collection of the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States. Photo 1988 by Dorothy Zeidman.



TAE: Elsewhere in this magazine, John Judis argues that “once the sordid memory of Soviet communism is laid to rest and the fervor of anti-government hysteria abates, politicians and intellectuals of the next century will once again draw openly upon the legacy of socialism.” What do you think of that general proposition?

MR. HOROWITZ: I think it speaks to a basic ignorance John Judis and all socialists have of economics, and their unwillingness to learn it.

They still think there’s a feasible socialist economy and haven’t come to terms with the arguments that von Mises made in 1922.

MR. FALCOFF: Maybe these people aren’t really socialists in an economic sense, anyway. Perhaps they have all the sentimentality of Marxism without any of its intellectual seriousness.

That’s always struck me as what characterizes the Left in not just the United States, but Great Britain as well. In Protestant countries, or post-Christian Protestant countries, the socialist impulse is often non-economic.

It’s interested in culture. It’s interested in personal relations. It’s interested in personal liberation, and also in using the state to promote lifestyle changes.

MR. O’SULLIVAN: I agree that that is a big change. I was reading a book that was a series of socialists making an attempt to distinguish between the fall of communism and the future of socialism.

And, of course, the distinction they saw was that communism was undemocratic, authoritarian, totalitarian. Socialism was essentially democratic.

Obviously most social democratic parties wouldn’t go for outright totalitarianism. But all socialism is based essentially upon coercion. All of the policies that are perceived as enabling people, empowering people, are either derived from taxation, which disempowers people, or they specifically require state intervention to prevent inequalitarian end results.

And this is something that the socialist mind, whatever form it takes, just does not want to accept. It wants to exercise coercion without acknowledging that it’s doing so.

And we see this in all of the new movements you’re talking about: the environmentalist movement...

MR. FALCOFF: The feminist movement, cigarettes...

MR. O’SULLIVAN: All of these are essentially coercive, but they pretend not to be.

MR. HOROWITZ: It’s basically a religious phenomenon and it’s an inability to come to terms with the fact that we are all unequal. We can’t be made equal, there isn’t going to be an end to conflict and war and all those things that make us human.

It is a secular religion and when it is a non-secular religion, it is a form of idolatry.

MR. BREINDEL: Before we go too far with this part of the discussion, let’s talk about the individuals who have never really accounted for their erroneous views of Soviet communism. It would be more understandable if some of the people who are willing to call themselves socialists still, and who are willing to look forward with some eagerness toward a time when there will be a

rehabilitation of Marx without the trappings of Soviet communism, had made some effort over the last half decade to come to terms with what exactly happened in the collapse of communism.

Eugene Genovese wrote an article for *Dissent* in which he described his absolute surprise at the fact that he had spent a lifetime in argument and apology for Soviet communism.

And he expected that at some point in the last decade he would have been confronted by someone or some institution or some group of people, who would ask him, “How did you do this? How did you say these things? What did you know and when did you know it?”

And he said, well, I’m going to write this article anyway, but by the way, nobody’s ever asked me these questions.

MR. BEICHMAN: Everything Marx predicted, almost without exception, has turned out to be false.

In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx says, “National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie.”

And then he says nationalists will disappear because of the supremacy of the proletariat. Wrong.

In *Das Kapital* Marx notes that the most advanced society would show to the less developed the image of their future. The most developed society in later years, was, of course, the United States.

On that basis, America should be the place where there should be a successful Socialist Party, yet it was in Europe that you had socialist parties.

The inevitable pauperization of the working class, the proletariat, which Marx predicted, never turned out right. So most Marxist ideas or predictions or diagnoses are false. They have no basis.

Despite the fictions of Marxism, it’s still held up as a body of science, the great image of mankind.

MR. FALCOFF: This goes back to what David was saying about a religious impulse. When the prophecy fails, people don’t necessarily lose faith. Sometimes they redouble their faith.

MR. HOROWITZ: But let’s not limit it to Marx. Gene Genovese is an incredibly honest person, having done what he did, but he still doesn’t understand the problem with socialism itself.

The idea that drove John Judis and all of us in those years was that the means of production had to be taken over. We would have a planned economy with political freedom. Now, any Hayekian or any Madisonian will tell you that you can’t have political freedom if you have social ownership of the means of production.

The collapse of communism also showed that planning produced a tenth-rate power—except for its military-industrial complex, and it stole the technology for that from the West.

MR. O’SULLIVAN: I want to make an incomplete point and propose a question to which I don’t have the answer.

David said it wasn’t just Marx, it was the whole socialist mentality. One can go further. Look at the support that the Soviet experiment got in this country from people who would never have considered themselves socialists.

There was something about this vast totalitarian enterprise,

SOCIALISM IS BASICALLY A
RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON,
AN INABILITY TO COME TO
TERMS WITH THE FACT THAT
WE ARE ALL UNEQUAL.

—David Horowitz

which murdered millions of people, which they found in a sense compelling, entrancing.

So much so, by the way, that I think the reason we don't see much now in the American press and the media about the gulag, we don't see any attention paid to the discovery of mass graves containing hundreds of thousands of people, is partly because at the back of everybody's mind there's the guilt feeling that we were, to some extent, complicit in this, in a way we were never complicit in the genocide of Hitler.

MR. BREINDEL: Yet we don't have the recognition that there is moral equivalence between Stalinism and Nazism.

David and I were speaking earlier about the fact that Corliss Lamont died and the *New York Times* said he was committed to human rights, international understanding, and above all, peace.

And it would be very hard to imagine someone who devoted his life to propagandizing for Hitler receiving parallel praise in the newspaper of record.

Here we are five years later and we're not closer to an understanding of what really happened in the Soviet Union. We're moving away from it.

And some of the people who are leading us away from the discussion are people who are distorting the past. Until we come to an honest understanding of what that system represented and what the people who apologized for it represent, it's very hard to move forward.

There's something very flip about saying, oh, get the Soviet thing behind us and we can then discuss socialism. It's very hard to get "the Soviet thing" behind us.

MR. BEICHMAN: What is going on now is an attempt to rehabilitate socialism. You have books by Evelyn Schrecker, Maurice Isserman, trying to show that the communists were really socialists who went wrong, or socialism was a great idea that went wrong.

MR. BREINDEL: They're also saying that American communism was a genuine indigenous American experience. They're saying that Earl Browder was right, that they were liberals in a hurry, that communism was twentieth-century Americanism.

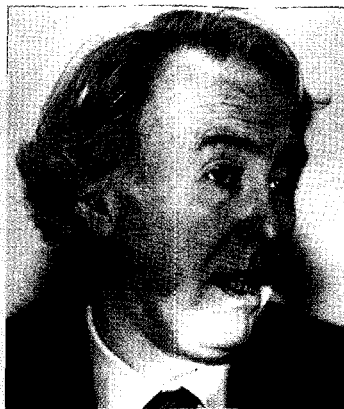
MR. FALCOFF: Unfortunately for them the documentation is coming out from Soviet experts.

MR. HOROWITZ: It will make absolutely no difference. We are dealing with a religious phenomenon.

The culture of the university: its intellectual tradition is the tradition that produced Hitler and Stalin. If you think of the dominant thinkers in our academies—Marx, Nietzsche, Hegel, Heidegger, Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, Foucault, De Man—they're all totalitarians.

That is the dominant intellectual tradition in our culture. It is not Hayek and Locke. Hayek barely exists in our universities.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: I'm reminded of Tom Bethell's definition of socialism: socialism is what fills the vacuum when religious



WHAT THE SOCIALIST
MIND REFUSES TO ACCEPT
IS THAT ALL SOCIALISM IS
BASED UPON COERCION.

—John O'Sullivan

faith disappears. And if you look at the leading figures in the history of socialism, it is generally people with a religious mentality who have lost religious faith.

It is those sectors of Christianity and Judaism who have ceased to believe and become secular-minded and they are attracted to something that promises salvation in the here and now.

MR. BREINDEL: Although when the god fails, as it has, they don't acknowledge that the god has failed.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Ken Minogue was talking about the appeal of socialism to rulers, and he said, here's a doctrine that says it's scientifically essential, indeed inevitable, that you shall seize power and suppress your opponents. Well, what could be more agreeable?

MR. BEICHMAN: We haven't used the word capitalism here once yet. The reason for this attempted revival of socialism is because capitalism has turned out, despite all

the predictions, to be successful. And what's more, you have a global plebiscite in favor of capitalism.

MR. FALCOFF: But you still get very interesting persistent counter-factual statements. Let me just quote one by former defense secretary Robert McNamara, who has gotten interested in the Cuban missile crisis, and has been going to these meetings in Cuba. He came back from one and made a speech at the National Press Club saying how much he admired Cuba's achievements in education and health.

MR. BEICHMAN: The S.O.B.

MR. FALCOFF: I quote McNamara because he is a person who until very recently was of unimpeachable respectability in establishment circles.

MR. BREINDEL: Well, you take somebody who's so burdened for having fought the right fight, but not fought it to the finish, that his thinking becomes distorted.

MR. FALCOFF: But there are many other people of that stripe who make statements like that. What does it say about our own political culture that people were prepared to say during the Soviet interim that we had a lot to learn from the educational and health delivery systems of Russia, East Germany, Cuba?

I often think, as a Latin Americanist, why is it that so many other countries that have had governments that claim to be leftist, or at least social democratic, have never attempted to implement a Cuban-style health-care system?

And what does it say about our own society that we would advocate this thing, which not only requires a totalitarian system but doesn't even work?

MR. BREINDEL: I think it goes back to this egalitarian quest in American political discourse and in the American imagination.

And there's something that seems appealing about the health-care delivery systems in East Germany, the Soviet Union, and China: everybody was getting the same thing. There were no class distinctions. Because you had more money, you couldn't get something better. Hillary Clinton is animated by the same sensibility.

MR. HOROWITZ: Communism is the philosophy of losers: people who cannot face the competition. That's what the egalitarian impulse is all about.

MR. FALCOFF: Well, David, although it's true that there's a strong egalitarian tradition in the United States, it's a republican egalitarianism rather than a socialist egalitarian tradition.

MR. HOROWITZ: This thing goes back to Methuselah. It is people who want a heaven on Earth. It's the Tower of Babel. It's Adam and Eve. It's people who want to be as gods. They cannot accept the human condition.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: That is why I think we're now moving into a period in which we're going to find ourselves menaced by far more dangerous forms of this impulse.

When this impulse was attached to an economic theory, then it was to some degree attached to something that could be tested and measured.

MR. BREINDEL: And that's not so for Islamic fundamentalism.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Not so for feminism. Not so for the environment.

MR. BREINDEL: Haven't scientific standards refuted the most ill-considered forms of environmentalism?

MR. O'SULLIVAN: You see, again, we're talking about moderates and extremists as we might be talking about the communists and social democrats.

Obviously there are people in the environmentalist movement who can be persuaded, say, by Gregg Easterbrook's latest book that the claims of disaster are exaggerated. That's not true for the people who regard Mother Earth as an actual sentient being, who is raped and violated when we do things like plow.

There's no way you can refute that. Equally, there's no way you can refute extreme feminists. And indeed, feminism itself turns out to be a completely protean doctrine.

Because one minute it asserts that there's no difference between the sexes, and the next it asserts that there are ineradicable differences in which the women are superior to the men.

So one is not dealing here, as one was with Marxism, with a doctrine that at least in principle is falsifiable.

MR. HOROWITZ: There has been a great intellectual degeneracy in the Left since the days when they just believed the source of all evil was private property. When they lost the idea that the proletariat would be revolutionary, they also lost their coherence.

Now that Marxism is gone, the Left owes far more of its intellectual roots to Mussolini than anywhere else. Today's socialism is based on the group. It's a reactionary, status-seeking ideology. Everybody is identified by their race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. For Mussolini and Hitler it was the nation or an ethnic body. That's really going back to pre-capitalist societies.

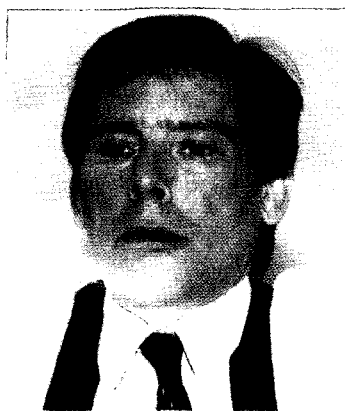


Photo by Jeff Stineck

THERE'S SOMETHING FLIP
ABOUT SOCIALISTS SAYING,
OH, GET THE SOVIET THING
BEHIND US AND THEN
WE'LL DISCUSS SOCIALISM.
IT'S HARD TO GET "THE
SOVIET THING" BEHIND US.

—Eric Breindel

And that's what they want, because it's snug and secure. It's also dangerous.

The other danger is that when you take away the class vision—when you take away Marxism's notion of the future—what do you have left? The nihilistic aspect.

These people begin by being alienated, hostile, angry, and at war with the system. Their intellectual doctrine is a war doctrine. They're very dangerous, and they're all over the place.

MR. FALCOFF: I'm not trying to be a Pollyanna, but I do go back to the point about internal contradictions.

For example, every so often when they have to appoint a president of a university in the inner city, they get into a big fight over whether it should be a Hispanic or a black or a woman, and it's usually difficult to find one person that fits all of these characteristics.

Victimology becomes this constant fabrication of victim groups, and it becomes more and more difficult to form a concrete political alliance.

MR. HOROWITZ: But they're not seeking alliance. In the black community, which is the community where the political

leadership is most seduced by the Left, you have what Stanley Crouch calls "Afro-fascism." They have the ideology. They're not looking for coalitions. They don't think in terms of a pluralistic society. They don't really care what anybody else thinks.

MR. BREINDEL: And a lot of these people seem to think that alliances don't matter because they're functioning in some kind of vacuum or nation apart, as though it's possible for a decided minority in a pluralistic society to fashion itself as an independent nation.

MR. HOROWITZ: That's what's killed so many gays. They created liberated zones. They decided that public health policies were repressive instruments of a heterosexual state. And they murdered 200,000 of their own people.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Can I suggest there's another way in which proliferating socialism is destructive, and that is economically.

In the days when you had a self-conscious economic socialism, you did have a steady succession of economic crises, but they were recognized as such and dealt with.

Generally, a socialist government would come into power, behave in an absurd way economically, come up against the barriers of foreign exchange reserves, or whatever, and then institute an extremely conservative fiscal and financial policy. They would then recover and get involved in another binge, generally in opposition.

Now, that, it seems to me, is not going to happen here. Because what you have in the new kinds of socialism is not so much a lack of faith in capitalism, as extraordinary faith in capitalism.

They believe it can bear any burden, pay any price. Whatever they load on it, it will take. Quotas, environmental regulations: the

economy will simply be able to stagger along. It's rich and productive enough, and in a sense, that might be true, if America were the only country in the world. Al Gore actually argues that regulation is itself a productive industry, which is an absurdity.

But because you have all of these different groups piling demands on, and there's nobody who has to think of the general welfare at the end of the day, then there's potential for enormous difficulty in a competitive world economy.

MR. BEICHMAN: How does socialism today face the fact that the trade union movement in America, which used to have strength—25 percent of the workforce—is down to about 12 percent?

MR. HOROWITZ: The base of the Left has shifted instead to the universities. These doctrines—feminism, multiculturalism, political correctness—spread like a prairie fire through the universities.

MR. BEICHMAN: In 1971 Sartre wrote the following, and I think this is today the slogan of socialism in the democracies: "To keep hope alive, one must, in spite of all the state's horrors and crimes, recognize the obvious superiority of the socialist camp." This *cri de coeur* for belief in spite of socialism's collapse everywhere dominates the academic Left.

MR. FALCOFF: Russell Jacoby's book *The Last Intellectuals* makes an interesting point about this. These people have lost interest in political power, except in their own little provinces.

MR. HOROWITZ: They control the universities...

MR. FALCOFF: ...and that's all they care about.

MR. BEICHMAN: But we still need to worry about Sovietologists like Jerry Hough, because they control what goes on in doctoral dissertations and who gets the jobs.

MR. HOROWITZ: It's not like the universities are a staging position to take further power. It's their cocoon. It just goes back to my point that it's the philosophy of losers. It's people who cannot face competition. The university is the perfect place. It's life tenure.

MR. BREINDEL: Okay, but universities still produce the next generation.

MR. FALCOFF: I think Arnold and I are the only people at this table who have been college professors. My own experience is that I couldn't get those kids to remember anything: they'd just write it all down and regurgitate it and forget it the next day. And I'd console myself that the students are quite cynical about a lot of this left-wing agitprop.

MR. BEICHMAN: But that's not true on the graduate level. It's the graduate student level that they control.

MR. FALCOFF: There's a political economy to this, and that is that there are so damn few jobs for graduate students today, that these people are not going to go out and teach. So I think that what's going on in the universities, while deplorable, is not very relevant to what's going on in our political culture.



Photo by Jeff Scharick

THE SOCIALIST IMPULSE
TODAY IS OFTEN NON-
ECONOMIC. IT'S INTERESTED
IN CULTURE, IN PERSONAL
RELATIONS, AND IN USING
THE STATE TO PROMOTE
LIFESTYLE CHANGES.

—Mark Falcoff

MR. BEICHMAN: Mark, I think that Gertrude Himmelfarb would disagree with you on writing off the institutions. Her point has been that it's the social sciences that determine moral values. It's not the engineering schools that do.

MR. BREINDEL: Yeah, I'm a little uncomfortable with the point you're making. The universities are essential elements of the life and the future of any civilization.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: And the transmission of memory.

MR. BREINDEL: If we're talking about what gets written, what gets published, what people read, what appears in books, it's a very serious business.

I do agree that universities have become less relevant as they've filled up with people who can't win in an open competition of thought, as David says. The great marketplace of ideas where you actually have to debate and argue in order to hold your position would not be a very safe circumstance for people who have been apologizing for wrong and evil ideas for most of their adult lives.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: I have mixed feelings. On the one hand, I think that it's one of the marks of the superiority of a

capitalist society over a socialist one that it does permit to flourish institutions that are completely run on opposite principles—either feudal principles or socialist principles.

You cannot have capitalist communes in a socialist society. They simply don't permit it (although they exist in the form of the black market). People get executed for that kind of thing.

In our society, on the other hand, socialist institutions are not only tolerated but are financed by the state. Yet they are themselves often internally repressive.

Departments select who's going to be in them, what's going to be studied, on explicitly political criteria. That's certainly true of black studies and women's studies.

What's worrying is that this leaks into other institutions. If you look at the university schools of journalism, they are not turning out people who want to report the news. They are turning out people with specifically approved political attitudes.

And consequently, the newspapers that choose the best graduates of these places develop a similar kind of political correctness inside the newsroom.

As a result, the American people can't get the news that it trusts, and it turns to talk radio. And what happens then? Talk radio then becomes denounced as an agency of pervasive paranoia.

MR. BEICHMAN: Let me give you an example. Your colleague, Peter Collier, wrote a very good piece in the *Washington Times* about Angela Davis getting a tenured professorship. Unbelievable.

MR. HOROWITZ: And worse—a president's professorship—the highest honor you can get.

MR. BEICHMAN: A few years ago, the White House wanted to nominate Peter Duignan, a very distinguished Africanist at the Hoover Institution, as the national archivist.

The whole history profession—or the socialists within it at least—reared up in a huff because he was called a defender of apartheid, which he was not. He was called a racist, which he was not. And the White House wouldn't even send up the nomination. But Angela Davis can get her appointment with no trouble, in 1995.

MR. HOROWITZ: Universities and liberal arts are at the lowest intellectual ebb in the history of America, and are the least free since colleges were administered by clerics in the time of the Salem witch trials.

I was a Marxist at Columbia in the McCarthy '50s and I was never graded politically. I was never given only one side of an issue. I was never indoctrinated, although all my professors were anti-communist.

MR. BEICHMAN: Howard Zinn of Boston University says a professor who teaches and doesn't have political opinions that he puts into the classroom is failing in his duty as a teacher.

MR. BREINDEL: Yet we wouldn't be allowed to say that Howard Zinn's political tradition is a political tradition of apologizing for American communism and the Soviet Union, because that would be denounced as McCarthyist.

Angela Davis's professorship was reported throughout the country as the resurrection of a civil rights activist. She's not a civil rights activist. She's an American Communist who ran as vice president on the Communist Party ticket, and apologized, until the day the Berlin Wall came down, for every mass vice of Stalin and communism.

MR. FALCOFF: Well, that's where we are in the universities. How about American politics? Since the last election I've been wondering how powerful are Dan Rather, Peter Jennings, the *New York Times* editorial page, and the *Washington Post*, really?

The political realm has a wonderful reality check: people have votes.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: But for a reality check to be effective there must be accurate information. I don't see that happening.

MR. HOROWITZ: Well let me be the cockeyed optimist. Look at China. It was walled off, sealed off from the rest of the world, and then, Tiananmen Square pops up. And in America today it's not like people are being told that affirmative action is bad. They can see it.

MR. FALCOFF: Well, the *Washington Post* recently gave a big play to the Labor Department study saying that affirmative action had had no discriminatory effects whatever. I looked at that and I laughed and I thought, "I wonder how many people who read this are going to believe it, given that a lot of us have had



THE BASE OF THE LEFT
HAS SHIFTED FROM TRADE
UNIONS TO THE
UNIVERSITIES. FEMINISM,
MULTICULTURALISM, AND
POLITICAL CORRECTNESS
SPREAD LIKE A PRAIRIE FIRE
THROUGH THE UNIVERSITIES.

—David Horowitz

firsthand experience with this for 30 years."

MR. BREINDEL: That's true, Mark, but on the other hand, Juan Williams of the *Washington Post* was able to get on national television and say, "I think what you saw in Oklahoma City was the angry white male in his natural state."

MR. HOROWITZ: That, just like the 100-days-of-Democratic-opposition-to-everything, is a sign of the total bankruptcy of the Left. It's hysterical. It's name-calling. It has absolutely no ideas to combat the Republican conservative revolution with at all. And I think the effect of it is...

MR. FALCOFF: To drive people to talk radio, CNN, C-SPAN.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: And to have a chilling effect on public debate.

MR. HOROWITZ: It's just like before the last election. The demonization of the religious right, the attempt to brand the Republican Party as fanatics. It's not going to work.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: I think your optimism is extremely pessimistic. Because what you're saying is that these terrible events can happen, these slurs can be made, but at the end of the day, the effects of socialism in action are so unpleasant that people will rebel against them.

With that I completely agree. But in the meantime, what has happened is the destruction of certain traditions which made life more civilized. For example, the tradition of civil debate, wherein evidence and proof are different from mere assertion: that distinction is simply being lost.

Increasingly, questions of individual guilt or innocence are not decided in court on the basis of the evidence presented. They are decided in public opinion on the basis of the general advantage accruing to one side or the other.

For instance child sex abuse: anybody who's accused of it, until very recently, was assumed to be guilty—because of a feminist argument that to doubt it was widespread was to condone it and blame victims.

MR. HOROWITZ: Tailhook is another place real personal damage was suffered. Salem is a theme in American life. There will be moods like this and people get stampeded.

But the tide is conservative in this country. When I first came to the conservative movement, I was struck by the timidity of conservatives. And today, what I'm struck by is that you do have a Rush Limbaugh. He's not going to back off.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: He is the exception. Others will.

MR. HOROWITZ: Look, when the House Republicans proposed to *increase* the welfare state over the next five years at a slightly slower rate than the current path they were called "Nazis" by the Democrats. Charles Rangel. John Lewis. You know, stealing food from children.

Yet what I saw is that the troops stood fast. They didn't collapse as a coalition; 99 percent of the Contract was voted

through—299 votes out of 302. Individuals were actually strengthened, and I see people who are more moderate, like Susan Molinari, who voted for the Clinton crime bill, acting very tough now as a leader of the House.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: I agree with that. But let's suppose that we're sitting on the morrow of victory. We, so to speak, have "won." We've got the Senate, the House, the presidency, and the Supreme Court.

MR. HOROWITZ: Now, the universities.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Exactly. Do we want in the universities to have a situation in which leftist ideologues are replaced simply by rightist ideologues?

I think we'd all feel that that was a very small step forward at best. And unfortunately, what we're seeing and have seen since the advent of socialism is the destruction of a very intricate web of institutions and traditions that constituted civil society.

They were totally destroyed in the Soviet Union, but here they are being significantly eroded. And we will be worse people—not just our opponents—as a result.

MR. FALCOFF: John, it's interesting that you say that. Because one of the things that I'm struck by, as a fairly frequent visitor to Britain, is how much more civility there is in Britain in intellectual discourse. If you watch a television debate, they do stick to evidence, usually, and they don't talk about whether you're a good person or a bad person if you believe this or you believe that.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: I also think that if you were comparing Britain today with Britain 10 or 20 years ago, you'd be struck by a decline in civility.

MR. HOROWITZ: Seeing the destruction of a great institution like the *New York Times* saddens everybody who looks at it. But I don't think that we're that far away from restoring these institutions.

MR. BREINDEL: Wait a minute. We're not going to restore the *New York Times*. That's a bankrupt institution that we hope withers away, right?

MR. HOROWITZ: Well, I don't know that it'll wither away. But institutions that remain in the clutches of the Left will decline.

MR. BEICHMAN: Not the universities.

MR. HOROWITZ: The universities are complex institutions. They have vast science departments, engineering departments, where you don't have political correctness. The departments that require mathematics, like economics, are much better than softer sciences.

MR. BEICHMAN: But what is happening is that students, because of the cultural atmosphere, which is just mephitic, no longer pick the hard sciences. If we didn't have imports from India and Pakistan, our engineering schools would have



Photo by Jeff Starnick

EVERYTHING MARX
PREDICTED, ALMOST WITHOUT
EXCEPTION, HAS
TURNED OUT TO BE FALSE.
YET DESPITE THE FICTIONS OF
MARXISM, IT'S STILL HELD UP
AS A BODY OF SCIENCE.

—Arnold Beichman

no faculties. Because students are going into sociology and quasi-sociology. A Russian student told me she was able to get out of Stanford in three years, and she couldn't understand why anybody hung around that long.

So I asked a bunch of engineering students at Stanford, "Is it possible to do your engineering studies in three years instead of four?" And they said, oh, sure. "Why don't you do it?" Well, it's a lot of fun to be here.

MR. HOROWITZ: That's a reasonable answer.

MR. BEICHMAN: You're kidding.

MR. HOROWITZ: You don't want to be so gloomy.

What I'm impressed by is the number of really sophisticated and aggressive conservative students these leftists on the campuses turn out. It's a result of going up against the Left. You know, the Left has made them much more sophisticated.

MR. BEICHMAN: If you were asked to give an estimate about the power of the Left in the American university, how many years would you say this Marxified group has left?

MR. HOROWITZ: They're going to have to die.

MR. FALCOFF: It's like a snake that swallows a rabbit. It's got to work itself out.

MR. BEICHMAN: On this university question, I am moved by something that Lionel Trilling wrote in 1951 in *The Liberal Imagination*:

"This is the great vice of academicism, that it is concerned with ideas, rather than with thinking, and nowadays, the errors of academicism do not stay in the academy. They make their way into the world. And what begins as a failure of perception among intellectual specialists finds its fulfillment in policy and action."

MR. BREINDEL: It was true then. It was truer 10 years later. It was probably as true 20 years later, and it's not as true today.

MR. HOROWITZ: Absolutely. The Clinton administration, to the extent that it drew on the ranks of the intellectuals at all, went to...

MR. O'SULLIVAN: People like Graham Allison.

MR. BREINDEL: Defeated elected officials.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Corporate lawyers. People from pressure groups like Donna Shalala.

MR. BEICHMAN: Well, that's the most hopeful thing I've heard today.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: I think we should discuss one more thing. If we're right in discerning a new revolutionary upsurge, which consists of the breakdown of Marxism into these different kinds of identity socialists, what is the conservative response going to be?

It seems to me that communitarianism is a liberal half-way house to have time to think about these questions.

And some kind of conservative response, which incorporates

individual liberty within family structures and local neighborhood life, has got to be found, and one that makes sense not simply in terms of suburban and small-town America but in terms of urban America. I don't know that we have the answer to that.

MR. HOROWITZ: I think of conservatism as a counterrevolution to the French Revolution. I believe the Gingrich revolution is a rollback of both the 1960s and the 1930s.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: I agree, but it seems that when I look at the Contract these things all make sense as Item One or Item Two or Item Three. But what's the overall idea? The leftists at the moment don't have any overall idea of what kind of society they'd like. Do we?

MR. HOROWITZ: I think it's to devolve power back to the individual as much as can be done.

MR. FALCOFF: And to evoke a greater sense of individual responsibility.

MR. HOROWITZ: Yes. Gingrich has got it all spelled out—responsibility, accountability, plus what Grover Norquist put into one sentence: “leave us alone.” The “leave us alone” part is a little too simple, but there's a coherence to the whole package, and it pulls together. It's what Americans believe.

MR. FALCOFF: By itself, “leave us alone” is too simple. It's part of it, but it's too simple. I think as a nation of immigrants, the United States has a special ethos that makes it very different from other countries—at least other non-immigrant countries.

When a Mexican immigrates to this country, he does that instead of making revolution in Mexico. The immigrant comes here and goes to work. That's his revolution. That makes the United States very different from Sweden or Holland.

MR. HOROWITZ: Joshua Muravchik said at the Second Thoughts conference that America is the utopia.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: I don't agree with that. I think if it were true it would be a bad thing. I don't believe utopia is a desirable place.

But there is a utopian element in conservative thinking in America, and I think it's a bad element and it leads us into all sorts of errors. For instance the attempt to create a community that isn't really a community, that is eroded by high and continuing immigration—I stress both. Brief bursts of high immigration may be fine, and continuing modest immigration is fine. But the two together undermine the common sense of the American community. And the reason we have high and continuing immigration is because of a utopian concept of America as a nation that can absorb any number of people at any time and transform them.

And conservatism is not just about the individual, is it? Conservatism has always been about community. It's always been about families. It's always been about intermediate institutions.

And it seems to me that we can't rely on the ones that used to be powerful. The churches have actually now refused to accept

WE ARE GOING TO BE
MENACED BY FAR MORE
DANGEROUS FORMS OF
EGALITARIANISM. THE
SOCIALIST IMPULSE USED TO
BE ATTACHED TO ECONOMIC
THEORY, WHICH COULD BE
TESTED AND MEASURED.
NOT SO FOR FEMINISM OR
ENVIRONMENTALISM.

—John O'Sullivan

the kind of role that they played in society, where they would be the helping agencies for people.

MR. HOROWITZ: But it's changing, John. The mainline churches that were taken over by the liberals and the left are in decline and the evangelicals are growing.

America is amazing in that way. Talk radio is the symbol of what happens. You close off this. You close off that. It pops up somewhere else.

MR. BREINDEL: It's a phenomenon that expresses itself in what we call right-wing religious conservatism, which is a scary phenomenon only if you want it to be.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: If you're willing to believe the worst of people on all occasions. But I think that intermediate institutions which used to exist are now decayed and the new ones are only on the point of arriving.

And until we've really established those barriers between ourselves and our families on the one hand and the state on the other, conservatism is going to be one-armed.

MR. BEICHMAN: When I debate leftists and they start denouncing America as a horrible country, I always say, well, you know, it may be that you're right. Do you have a model of another country that you think is superior?

MR. FALCOFF: Do they point to Germany or Sweden?

MR. BEICHMAN: Oh, no! They say it's unfair to raise such questions.

MR. HOROWITZ: When I was a kid they used to say to me, if you don't like America, go to Russia. And I think that was very reasonable. Every leftist that believes this is an oppressive, racist, sexist, society, please...

MR. BEICHMAN: Go find a better alternative.

Speaking of alternatives, can Marxism exist without a model country?

MR. FALCOFF: One of the things I've been thinking about, Arnold, is whether they might not do better *not* having the model country. No disappointing reality to cast a shadow over the rosy theory. Although sometimes I think it falls to little Cuba to play the model role.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: I hate to tell you this, but America is seen by a lot of leftists in Western Europe as the utopian model, because they see it as a society that is not held together by anything other than the bonds of ideology and one or two common institutions.

MR. BEICHMAN: I propose we close with the following sentence from a British Marxist named Fred Inglis: “Socialism, however disfigured by the Cold War, is still the only rhetoric left with which to berate the delusions and cruelty of horrible capitalism.”

So at least we have some use for Marxism.

